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NDPERS General MMA Notice (11/01/05)

## **Important Notice from the North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System About Your Prescription Drug Coverage and Medicare**

This notice may or may not apply to you. However we are required to provide it in compliance with the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement Modernization Act of 2003. Please share this information with any other family member who is covered under the plan and who may be eligible for Medicare Part D.

Please read this notice carefully and keep it where you can find it. This notice has information about your current prescription drug coverage with the North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System (NDPERS) and new prescription drug coverage available January 1, 2006 for people with or eligible for Medicare. It also tells you where to find more information to help you make decisions about your prescription drug coverage.

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- 1. Starting January 1, 2006, new Medicare prescription drug coverage will be available to everyone with Medicare.**
  - 2. NDPERS has determined that the prescription drug coverage offered by Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) is, on average for all plan participants, expected to pay out as much as the standard Medicare prescription drug coverage will pay.**
  - 3. Read this notice carefully - it explains the options you have under Medicare prescription drug coverage, and can help you decide whether or not you want to enroll.**
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You may have heard about Medicare's new prescription drug coverage, and wondered how it would affect you. NDPERS has determined that your prescription drug coverage with BCBSND is, on average for all plan participants, expected to pay out as much as the standard Medicare prescription drug coverage will pay.

Starting January 1, 2006, prescription drug coverage will be available to everyone with Medicare through Medicare prescription drug plans. All Medicare prescription drug plans will provide at least a standard level of coverage set by Medicare. Some plans might also offer more coverage for a higher monthly premium.

**Because your existing coverage is on average at least as good as standard Medicare prescription drug coverage, you can keep this NDPERS coverage and not pay extra if you later decide to enroll in Medicare coverage.**

Individuals with Medicare can enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan from November 15, 2005 through May 15, 2006. However, because you have existing prescription drug coverage that, on average, is as good as Medicare coverage, you can choose to join a Medicare prescription drug plan later. Each year after that, you will have the opportunity to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan from November 15<sup>th</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>.

**If you do decide to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan and drop your NDPERS prescription drug coverage, be aware that you may not be able to get this coverage back.**

If you drop your coverage with NDPERS and enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan, you may not be able to get this coverage back later. You should compare your current coverage, including which drugs are covered, with the coverage and cost of the plans offering Medicare prescription drug coverage in your area before making a decision.

In addition, your current coverage pays for other health expenses, in addition to prescription drugs, and you will not remain eligible to receive all of your current health and prescription drug benefits if you choose to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan.

You should also know that if you drop or lose your coverage with NDPERS and don't enroll in Medicare prescription drug coverage after your current coverage ends, you may pay more to enroll in Medicare prescription drug coverage later. If after May 15, 2006, you go 63 days or longer without prescription drug coverage that's at least as good as Medicare's prescription drug coverage, your monthly premium will go up at least 1% per month for every month after May 15, 2006 that you did not have that coverage. For example, if you go nineteen months without coverage, your premium will always be at least 19% higher than what most other people pay. You'll have to pay this higher premium as long as you have Medicare coverage. In addition, you may have to wait until next November to enroll.

**For more information about this notice or your current prescription drug coverage...**

Contact the BCBS service unit at 701-223-1704 or in the Fargo area 701-282-1400. NOTE: You may receive this notice at other times in the future such as before the next period you can enroll in Medicare prescription drug coverage, and if this coverage changes. You also may request a copy of this notice.

**For more information about your options under Medicare prescription drug coverage...**

More detailed information about Medicare plans that offer prescription drug coverage is in the "Medicare & You 2006" handbook. You should have already received a copy of the handbook in the mail from Medicare. You may also be contacted directly by Medicare prescription drug plans. You can also get more information about Medicare prescription drug plans from the following resources:

- Visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) for personalized help.
- Call Senior Health Insurance Counseling (SHIC), a program of the North Dakota Insurance Department, at 1-800-247-0560.
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

For people with limited income and resources, extra help paying for a Medicare prescription drug plan is available. Information about this extra help is available from the Social Security Administration (SSA). For more information about this extra help, visit SSA online at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), or call them at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778).

**Remember: Keep this notice. If you enroll in one of the new plans approved by Medicare which offer prescription drug coverage after May 15, 2006, you may need to give a copy of this notice when you join to show that you are not required to pay a higher premium amount.**

Date: November 1, 2005

Name of Entity/Sender: North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System

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